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The nicotine-stained walls of Jack's room were plastered with pictures of models torn from gossip magazines. Young men and women with glossy hair, clear complexions, and perfect smiling teeth. He was a predator, despite the idealized portrait of him by his mother that was tacked unframed to the wall. It showed him in his youth thirty years ago. Stringy brown hair and enormous glasses that made him resemble a parasite, Jean-Paul Sartre as a tape-worm. He was always a predator.

Most mornings when I went in to do room-check there was piss in a teacup on top of his dresser. When I quizzed him about it at first he'd deny it but he always confessed eventually. With an air of inexorable honesty. He just couldn't help himself. He was a good guy who did bad things. How can you tell the dancer from the dance?

He had a litany of stupid questions. A catechism. A whole inquisition. Why are people bad? Why do people steal? Why do people kill? Why do people hurt dogs? Why do dogs lift their leg when they pee? One groped for the answer. There were reasons, but one was hard-pressed to come up with any. Heredity?

I tried to forestall him by asking first. Why do people steal?